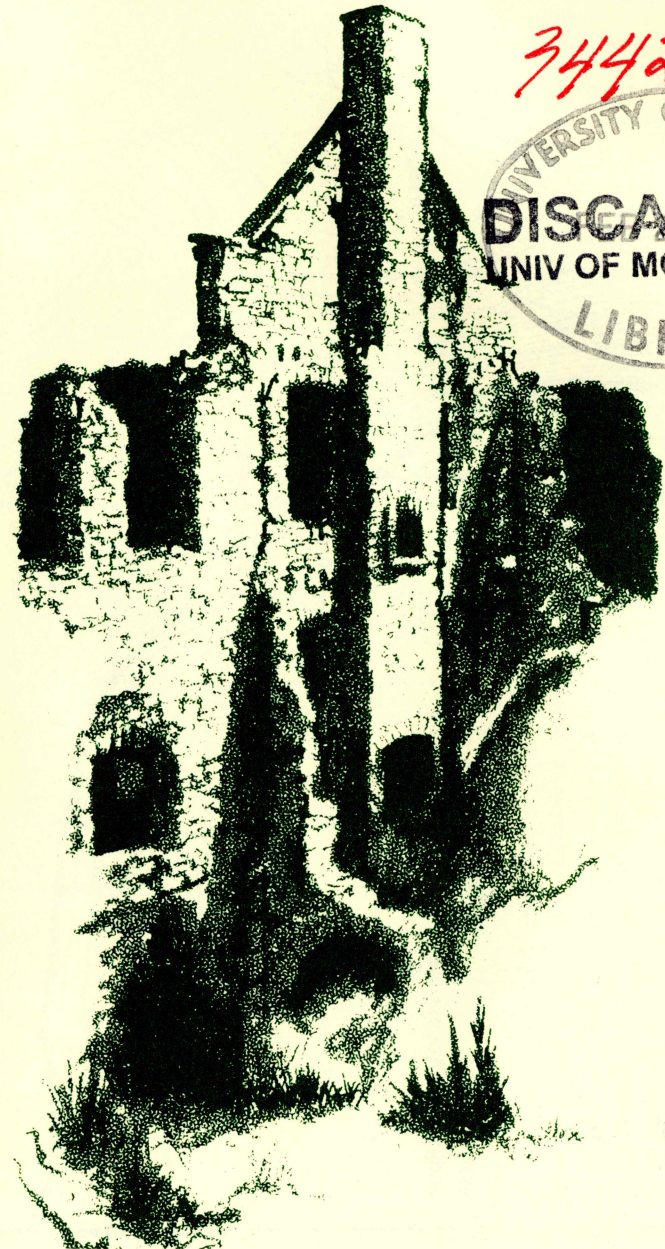




The Missouri Department of Natural Resources is the state agency responsible for the wise use of Missouri's natural resources.

Ha Ha Tonka State Park

TRAIL AND NATURAL AREA GUIDE



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Ha Ha Tonka State Park is comprised of approximately 2,507 acres on the Niangua Arm of the Lake of the Ozarks, five miles southwest of Camdenton. The most significant natural and man-made features, however, are concentrated in a 750-acre area adjacent to the lake and its confluence with Ha Ha Tonka Spring. Within this area exists a rich mixture of natural beauty, geologic oddity, romantic history, and abiding mystery unequaled in Missouri. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources purchased the property in December 1978, and Ha Ha Tonka State Park was dedicated and opened to the public on June 10, 1979.

CULTURAL HISTORY

The stark, vertical stone ruins of Ha Ha Tonka castle are nearly all that remain of one man's dream. In the early 1900s, Robert McClure Snyder, a prominent Kansas City businessman, conceived a private retreat, the centerpiece of which would be a magnificent European-style mansion or castle. The mansion was designed with 60 rooms grouped on three floors around a central hall rising three-and-a-half stories upward to a skylight. A stone carriage house, an 80-foot high water tower, and nine greenhouses were built to attend the main house.

In 1906, only one year after the start of construction, Snyder was killed in an automobile accident near his Kansas City home. The interior of the castle remained unfinished until his son had it completed in 1922 and occupied the upper two floors. In 1942, sparks from a fireplace kindled a tragic fire that gutted the castle and carriage house. Fires set by vandals destroyed the water tower in 1976.

NATURAL HISTORY

Ha Ha Tonka State Park is perhaps most noted for its complex of geologic features and formations. Geologically, Ha Ha Tonka is a classic example of "karst" topography, a landscape that is characterized by sinks, caves, underground streams, large springs, and natural bridges. Examples of all of these can be seen within a very small area of the park. Karst topography is the result of water percolating through porous underlying dolomite bedrock and causing it to dissolve. The weathering action of the water on the rock after many years forms the various karst features.

In the United States, Missouri is widely recognized for the karst landscape that occurs in the southern part of the state. This karst is best represented in more than 4,000 caves that are known in the state. Eight caves have been recorded so far in Ha Ha Tonka State Park. The caves, in addition to the wide variety of other karst features, make this state park one of Missouri's most outstanding karst areas and one of the nation's most important geologic sites.

In a broader sense, Ha Ha Tonka State Park is part of the Osage River Hills region of the Ozarks, a transition area between the prairie landscape farther west and the rugged forested hills farther east. Early records point out that this part of the country was very open. The original forests, where they occurred, were very poor because of thin and rocky soils. Within the sparse forest were native grasses and a mixture of prairie plants. Today we call this landscape type "savanna" and in presettlement times it was found throughout what is today Ha Ha Tonka State Park. Examples of the savanna landscape can be seen from several of the trails. A few well-protected hillsides that receive greater amounts of moisture contain fairly rich forests of northern red oak, shagbark hickory, and basswood, while on very dry south-facing hillsides and along woodland hilltops, there are open groves of black-jack oak, post oak, and black oak. Trail users will find not only a diverse assemblage of natural geologic wonders, but also a wide array of forest, savanna, and glade communities.

THE NATURAL AREA PROGRAM

Missouri has been blessed with an unusual diversity of native plants, animals, and scenic areas. The state has some of the largest springs in North America and the greatest number of caves of any state. There are tallgrass prairies, deep rich forests, barren glades, and numerous crystal clear streams. All these make for an unusually varied, beautiful, and interesting natural history that has shaped Missouri's cultural history as well.

As you tour Missouri's state parks, you will learn about our state's natural and cultural heritage. To ensure that special recognition and protection is afforded to some of the significant natural elements, certain areas have been designated as Missouri Natural Areas. Natural areas are managed and protected for their scientific, educational, and historical values. They are formally recognized as the least disturbed and highest-quality biological and geological sites across the state.

Missouri Natural Areas are specially signed and you are invited to explore them as you tour Missouri's state park system.

HA HA TONKA KARST NATURAL AREA

The 70-acre Ha Ha Tonka Karst Natural Area recognizes the most significant karst terrain in the park. Found here are an ancient collapsed cavern, a major deep-circulating spring, two large sinkholes, a natural bridge, and six caves.

THE TRAILS

The trails at Ha Ha Tonka provide access to most of the major features of the park. They have been designed to minimize destruction of the surrounding vegetation and prevent soil erosion. Please stay on the trails and **DO NOT TAKE SHORTCUTS**.

Due to the location of the trails, the high concentration of people, and the steep topography in the park, it is critical to the safety of others that **NO ROCKS** be thrown or kicked from the trails, bluffs, or overlooks.

In addition to the trails described below, there are other well-defined paths in the park providing access to the water tower, the carriage house, and Ha Ha Tonka castle. The trail leading from the parking area to the castle is accessible to the handicapped and contains a developed overlook from which most of the natural and cultural features of Ha Ha Tonka State Park can be seen. Part of Spring Trail is also accessible to the handicapped.

DELL RIM TRAIL - 1/2 MILE

Dell Rim Trail begins at the castle parking area and proceeds in a clockwise direction around the rim of Whispering Dell. This trail provides excellent views of the surrounding countryside. The first half of this trail provides an easy hike; the second half, which descends to the saddle between Whispering Dell and the spring, is quite strenuous and should be hiked only by persons in good physical condition. The trail is identified by red directional arrows.

CASTLE BLUFF TRAIL - 3/4 MILE

Castle Bluff Trail is a loop trail of moderate difficulty that begins on the west side of the castle. This trail leads to the greenhouse ruins, to one of the old quarries from which stone for the castle was obtained, and to towering bluffs overlooking the lake. Visitors arriving at the park by boat may use this trail as access to the castle. The trail is marked with brown arrows in a counterclockwise direction.

COLOSSEUM TRAIL - 1/2 MILE

This trail originates at the natural bridge parking area. Descending to the valley floor, the trail passes beneath the natural bridge, makes its way along the hillside, climbs to the rim above the spring and Whispering Dell, and then returns to its starting point by crossing over the natural bridge. The trail, marked with yellow arrows in a clockwise direction, provides a hike of moderate difficulty.

BOULDER RIDGE TRAIL - 1 MILE

Boulder Ridge Trail is a moderately difficult loop trail that traverses the small ridge to the west of the spring area picnic shelter. Large lichen-covered rocks scattered along the ridge create an inviting environment for hikers. The trailhead is located approximately 300 feet beyond the junction of the spring road and Highway D. The trail is signed in a clockwise direction.

QUARRY TRAIL - 1-1/2 MILES

Quarry Trail is a short loop trail that begins near the northwest corner of the castle and exits at the carriage house. The trail passes through a beautiful glade that allows open views of the lake and through one of the old quarries that was a source of stone for structures located in the park. The trail is marked with green arrows in a clockwise direction and provides an easy hike. By using the white connector trail, a shorter hike of one mile is possible.

The central feature is the Ha Ha Tonka canyon or gorge, which is one of the most spectacular chasms in the state. This chasm is the result of the collapse of an ancient cave system. This collapse created the island that now divides the spring branch and exposed the 250-foot bluffs that line one side of the chasm.

At the upper end of the canyon is Ha Ha Tonka Spring, the 12th largest in the state, with an average daily flow of 48 million gallons of water. This spring is the successor to the earlier and much larger underground water system that formed the now-collapsed cave system.

Just east of the spring there are two major sinkholes known as Whispering Dell and the Colosseum. Whispering Dell houses two small caves, while the Colosseum boasts an impressive natural bridge that is approximately 70 feet wide, 50 feet high, and spans almost 50 feet. The natural bridge is a remnant of the original cave roof.

Another significant feature of the natural area, although separated by the main park road, is River Cave, the largest cavern in the park. Waters entering River Cave Sinkhole reach an underground recharge area for the spring, only one-half mile away. River Cave also serves as a nursery site for gray bats. To protect the bat colony, the cave is closed to visitation from April 1 to Oct. 30. At other times of the year, park visitors may enter the cave with an approved caving permit, which may be obtained at the park office.

SPRING TRAIL - 1-1/2 MILES

Spring Trail can be entered from the spring parking area or from the parking area along Highway D just beyond the old post office. The lower section of Spring Trail, located between the parking area and Ha Ha Tonka Spring, is easily traveled, while the upper section is a little more strenuous. Approximately three-quarters of the lower portion of the trail is accessible to the handicapped. An overlook at the end of the handicapped-accessible portion is an excellent resting spot that provides good views of the spring branch. Blue arrows identify the main route, which is signed in a clockwise direction. A white connector trail provides easy access between the upper and lower levels of the trail.

ISLAND TRAIL - 3/4 MILE

This trail loops around the entire island and provides excellent views of Balanced Rock and the collapsed cavern system with its 250-foot rock walls. The trail begins at the mill race and proceeds in a counterclockwise direction around the island. Island Trail has both moderate and difficult sections. Green arrows identify the main loop and white arrows identify a connector trail that allows a shorter hike of about half the distance.

DEVIL'S KITCHEN TRAIL - 1 MILE

Devil's Kitchen Trail begins from the parking area located east of Highway D just beyond the park entrance road. Hikers can visit woodland, glade, and unique geologic features known as Devil's Kitchen and Devil's Promenade along this trail. Devil's Kitchen Trail can provide a more remote and private hike than other trails in the park. Hiking on this trail is moderately difficult. The trail is marked with brown arrows in a clockwise direction.

TURKEY PEN HOLLOW TRAIL — 3/4 MILE

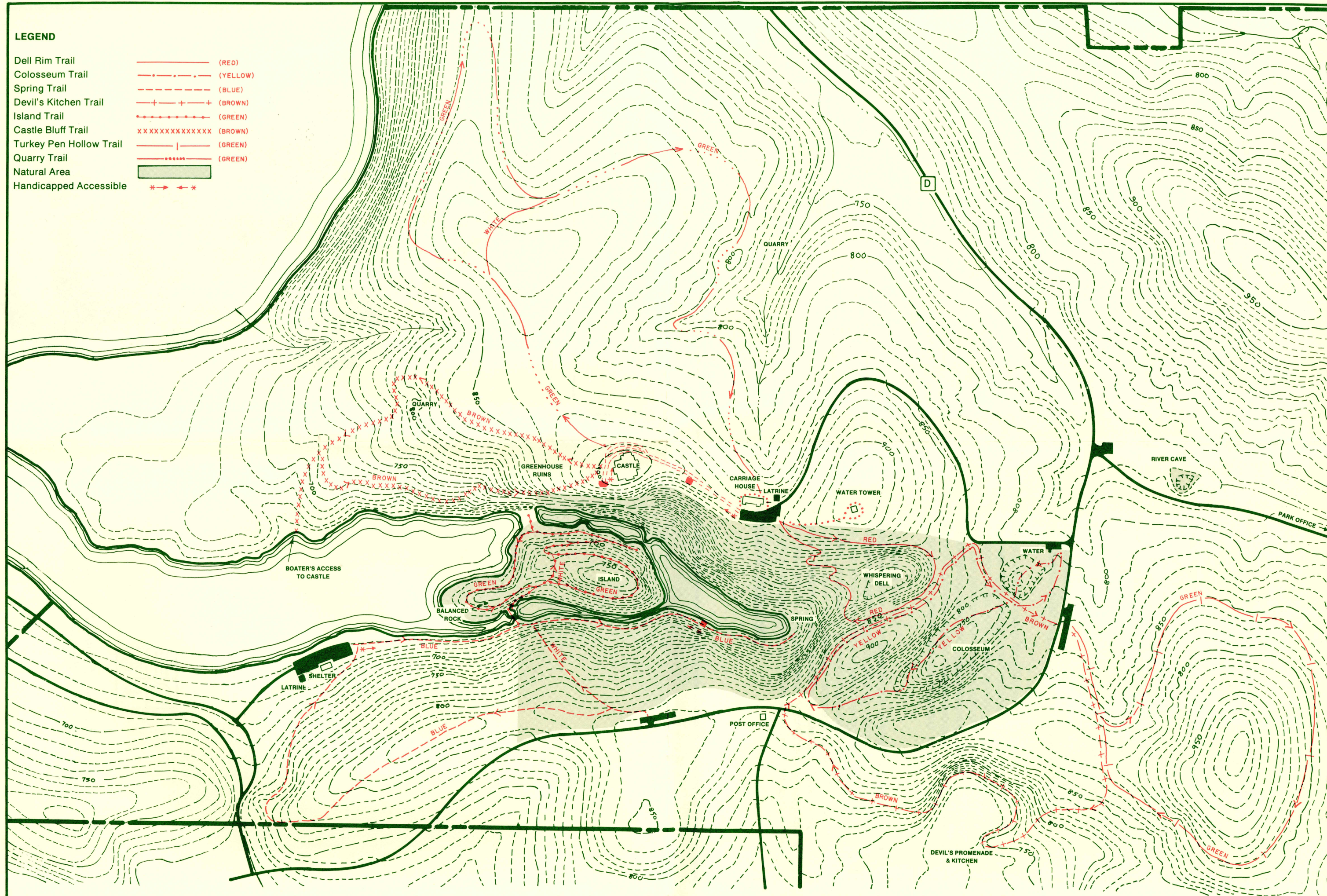
Turkey Pen Hollow Trail shares the route of Devil's Kitchen Trail for approximately 400 feet before separating and turning to the left. It is a loop trail that traverses a portion of the park that is being maintained as savanna. The trail is named after a hollow located at the southern end of the savanna management area. A self-guiding booklet that interprets the savanna is available at the trailhead. It is an easy hike that offers surprisingly good views of the water tower. Green arrows identify the trail, which is signed in a clockwise direction.

If you have any questions concerning the trails or natural area at Ha Ha Tonka State Park, please contact the park superintendent at Route 1, Box 658, Camdenton, MO 65020, or call (314)346-2986.

For information on the more than 300 miles of trail and 30 natural areas in other state parks, contact the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102, or call toll-free 1-800-334-6946.

LEGEND

- Dell Rim Trail (RED)
- Colosseum Trail (YELLOW)
- Spring Trail (BLUE)
- Devil's Kitchen Trail (BROWN)
- Island Trail (GREEN)
- Castle Bluff Trail (BROWN)
- Turkey Pen Hollow Trail (GREEN)
- Quarry Trail (GREEN)
- Natural Area
- Handicapped Accessible



LEGEND

Property Line	---
Section Line	---
Contour Line	- - -
Roads	---
Timber Line	~~~~~
Major Power Line	---
Boulder Ridge Trail	---

600 300 0 600 1200
SCALE IN FEET

See Map Above

